(1) 95-675

Supreme Court, U.S.
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No. _____

In the
Supreme Court of the United States
October Term, 1995

Walter C. Kellogg, Trustee for
West Texas Marketing Corporation,

Petitioner,

vs.

United States of America,

Respondent.

Petition for Writ of Certiorari
to the United States Court of Appeals
for the Fifth Circuit

Petition for Writ of Certiorari

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QUESTION PRESENTED

Does section 502(b)(2) of the Bankruptcy Code stop the accrual of legal liability for interest on pre-petition claims against a corporation in bankruptcy such that the corporation may not deduct that interest expense on tax returns filed on the corporation's behalf?

LIST OF PARTIES

The following is a list of all parties to the proceeding in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, whose judgment is sought to be reviewed:

Appellant:
Walter C. Kellogg, Trustee for West Texas Marketing Corporation

Appellee:
United States of America

West Texas Marketing Corporation has the following parent companies or subsidiaries within the meaning of Supreme Court Rule 29.1:

None.

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United States of America,

Respondent.

Petition for Writ of Certiorari
to the United States Court of Appeals
for the Fifth Circuit

TO THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT:

Walter C. Kellogg, Trustee of West Texas Marketing Corporation, asks this court to issue a writ of certiorari to review the opinion issued May 31, 1995, by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

OPINIONS AND JUDGMENTS BELOW

Petitioner has reproduced in a separate appendix the opinions and judgments which the courts below have issued. The opinions and judgments are as follows:

In re West Texas Marketing Corp. (Kellogg v. United States), 54 F.3d 1194 (5th Cir. 1995) (court of appeals decision).

In re West Texas Marketing Corp. (Kellogg v. United States), No. 1:93-CV-124-C (N.D. Tex. Dec. 20, 1993) (district court decision).

In re West Texas Marketing Corp. (Kellogg v. United States), 155 B.R. 399 (Bankr. N.D. Tex. 1993) (bankruptcy court's decision).

JURISDICTION

The court of appeals issued its opinion May 31, 1995. The court of appeals denied Kellogg's petition for rehearing July 26, 1995. This court has jurisdiction, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1) (West 1995), to review the decision of the court of appeals.

STATUTES INVOLVED

11 U.S.C.A. § 502(b)(2) (West 1993 & Supp. 1995):

(b) Except as provided in subsections (e)(2), (f), (g), (h) and (i) of this section, if such objection to a claim is made, the court, after notice and a hearing, shall determine the amount of such claim in lawful currency of the United States as of the date of the filing of the petition, and shall allow such claim in such amount except to the extent that —

. . .

(2) such claim is for unmatured interest; . . .

11 U.S.C.A. § 726(a)(5) (West 1993 & Supp. 1995):

(a) Except as provided in section 510 of this title, property of the estate shall be distributed —

(1) first, . . .

(2) second, . . .

(3) third, . . .

(4) fourth, . . .

(5) fifth, in payment of interest at the legal rate from the date of the filing of the petition, on any claim paid under paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (4) of this subsection; . . .

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The court of appeals opinion correctly states the facts.

In 1982 West Texas Marketing filed for bankruptcy. The bankruptcy court eventually converted the chapter 11 case to a chapter 7 liquidation. The bankruptcy court had jurisdiction of this case pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 157 (West 1995).

West Texas Marketing had maintained its records and calculated its federal income tax liability using the accrual method of accounting (III R. 207). In 1991, Walter Kellogg, as trustee for the bankruptcy estate, filed amended tax returns for West Texas Marketing for 1988 and 1989, asserting that the company (1) had failed previously to deduct post-petition interest on resolved unsecured claims for 1988 and 1989; and (2) could deduct net operating loss carryforwards based, in part, on post-petition interest for such claims for 1982 through 1987. Kellogg also sought to deduct post-petition interest for such unsecured claims on the 1991 tax return for West Texas Marketing. The total interest expense was about $12.6 million, which gave rise to the total refund claim of approximately $1.1 million. The IRS disallowed the refunds.

Kellogg filed an adversary proceeding to recover the refund. The case was tried on stipulated facts. Kellogg argued that under the Fifth Circuit's decision in *Fahs v. Martin*, 224 F.2d 387 (5th Cir. 1955), it was proper to deduct post-petition interest on pre-petition claims against the debtor because the debtor's obligation to pay that interest was fixed and unconditional, and that satisfied the "all events" test for the deduction of this expense. *See* I.R.C. § 461 (outlining the elements of the "all events" test); Treas Reg. 1.461-1(a)(2)(i) (1992) (same).

The bankruptcy court decided that *Fahs* was no longer the law in the Fifth Circuit. The court also decided that under 11 U.S.C. § 726(a)(5) post-petition interest on claims is not a fixed liability under the "all events test" because interest on claims filed in a chapter 7 bankruptcy case is payable from the bankruptcy estate only after payment in full of all allowed claims, and only if after the payment of those claims there are assets in the estate with which to pay such interest.

On appeal, the district court affirmed the bankruptcy court's ruling without substantive comment.

The Fifth Circuit concluded that Kellogg had failed to show that all events had occurred which would establish the corporation's liability for post-petition interest. The court based its conclusion on the effect of sections 502 and 726 of the Bankruptcy Code. Section 502(b)(b) provides that a claim filed in a bankruptcy case shall be allowed unless "such claim is for unmatured interest." 11 U.S.C.A. § 502(b)(2) (West 1993 & Supp. 1995). The court decided that under section 502(b)(2) "interest stops accruing at the date of the filing of the petition."

The court then noted that under section 726, payment from the estate of post-petition interest on allowed claims is made only after payment of these prior claims. 11 U.S.C.A. § 726(a)(5) (West 1993 & Supp. 1995). The court concluded that "if, in the distribution of WTMC's assets in accordance with § 726(a)(1)-(4), all assets are depleted, then the estate will not have incurred any obligation to pay interest on un-secured claims."

As a result of its interpretation of these two provisions of the Code, the court concluded that "the condition necessary to create the liability for the post-petition interest failed to occur." What had failed to occur, according to the court, was the event that made certain the liability for interest on these creditors' claims — payment from the estate of all claims under section 726(a)(1)-(4), and the availability of sufficient assets in the estate to pay interest on the creditors' claims under section 726(a)(5).

In other words, the court held that the obligation to pay from the estate post-petition interest on creditors' claims was only a contingent liability. Because that liability was contingent rather than fixed, the liability did not satisfy the first element of the "all events" test. Because the interest expense did not satisfy the "all events" test in the court's view, West Texas Marketing could not deduct that interest.

The dissent argued that the majority improperly treats section 502(b) as a substantive rule rather than as a rule of convenience for the rational administration and distribution of the assets of the bankruptcy estate. According to the dissent, the majority has ruled in effect that section 502(b) *voids* the state-law obligation to pay interest, reimposing that obligation under section 726(a)(5) only if sufficient estate assets remain to pay interest after distribution of etate assets to pay claims under section 726(a)(1)-(4). Such a ruling, the dissent noted, was contrary to a substantial body of precedent established by this Court.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

The holding of the Fifth Circuit could impact tens of thousands of bankruptcy cases. The decision will impact any case in which a debtor or its trustee seeks a tax deduction for the expense of accrued post-petition interest. The decision could have two wide-ranging effects. First, it could deprive bankruptcy estates and creditors of a valuable asset in the form of a tax refund made available based on the deduction of post-petition interest. By denying the debtor a deduction to which it is otherwise entitled, and by allowing the IRS to retain taxes that the debtor paid, creditors whose claims might otherwise be paid, at least in part, are not paid. This results in a windfall for the IRS, at the expense not of the debtor, but of the creditors who might otherwise have their claims paid from funds in the bankruptcy estate.

Second, with regard to all corporate debtors and those individual debtors who do not achieve a discharge by reason of their bankruptcy, the decision effectively eliminates the obligation to pay post-petition interest on debts which were not paid in the bankruptcy. Creditors whose claims are not paid in the bankruptcy thus have no basis for recovering post-petition interest against the debtor after the bankruptcy is over, even as to nondischarged debts.

A. The decision deprives bankruptcy creditors of a valuable asset.

One can best understand this matter by contrasting the situation of a corporation in bankruptcy with the situation of a financially troubled corporation not in bankruptcy. If a corporation is unable to pay substantial debt but declines to file a bankruptcy (and if no creditor group files involuntary bankruptcy against it), then based upon the tax regulations

and statutes as they now stand that corporation could deduct the interest running on its debts as it winds up its affairs, even though the corporation may never be financially able to pay any of that interest. If so, the corporation could obtain a tax refund based on such deductions and use these funds to make a distribution to its creditors on some pro rata basis.

By contrast, if the corporation files bankruptcy or is put there involuntarily, the outcome would be different if the court of appeals' decision stands. Although the purpose of a bankruptcy is to administer the debtor's assets for the benefit of creditors and to enhance the recoveries of those creditors, under the court of appeals' decision the corporation that does not have sufficient assets to pay all its claims and decides to file bankruptcy cannot deduct post-petition interest on those claims and thus is not entitled to a tax refund based on that deduction.

As a result, the corporation and its creditors cannot achieve in a bankruptcy what they could otherwise achieve in a nonbankruptcy context. This makes no sense. Bankruptcies are supposed to help the creditors rather than harm them. By misinterpreting the intent and effect of sections 502 and 726 of the Bankruptcy Code, the Fifth Circuit frustrates rather than furthers the purposes of bankruptcy administration.

B. The decision eliminates a corporate debtor's liability for post-petition interest on nondischarged debts.

A corporation involved in a chapter 7 bankruptcy does not receive a discharge. *See* 11 U.S.C.A. § 727(a)(1) (West 1993). A debt that is not discharged survives the bankruptcy, and a creditor may satisfy that debt from the debtor's post-petition assets. *See generally* 8A C.J.S. *Bankruptcy* § 349 (1988). This is confirmed by cases going as far back as *New*

Lamp Chimney Co. v. Ansonia Brass & Copper Co., 91 U.S. 656 (1875). In that case, a plaintiff brought suit for recovery on several promissory notes signed by a corporation that had been declared bankrupt. During the bankruptcy, the plaintiff had filed claims relating to these notes and received partial payment by means of the distributions from the estate. The corporation argued that because the plaintiff had received some payment in the bankruptcy, the present claims based on these same notes should be dismissed. This Court disagreed, noting that since the corporation did not receive a discharge, the plaintiff was entitled to pursue its claims on these notes even after the bankruptcy. *Id.* at 666.

More recently, in *Bruning v. United States*, 376 U.S. 358 (1964), this Court held that the government was entitled to recover, from assets acquired by a debtor after bankruptcy, post-petition interest on a tax assessment which had not been discharged. This Court rejected the argument that the rule which suspends post-petition interest against the estate applies to discharge the debtor from any liability for such interest.

The reason that Congress decided a corporation's debt would not be dischargeable was so that the corporation that continued to operate could not, after the bankruptcy, avoid any previously incurred debt. *See NLRB v. Better Building Supply Corp.*, 837 F.2d 377, 379 (9th Cir. 1988). The court of appeals' decision completely unravels Congress's policy in this respect, at least with regard to a chapter 7 corporate debtor's continuing liability for interest accruing after the filing of the bankruptcy petition. Based on this decision, a creditor cannot recover from such a corporate debtor interest on the corporation's debt after the bankruptcy filing if the estate did not have sufficient assets to pay all claims.

C. The decision is wrong.

The Internal Revenue Code allows the deduction of all interest accrued on indebtedness within the taxable year. I.R.C. § 163(a). The Code requires that taxable income be computed, and deductions taken, using the accounting method which the taxpayer normally uses. I.R.C. §§ 446(a), 461(a).

West Texas Marketing Company had used the accrual method of accounting. Under the accrual method an expense is incurred and must be taken into account for federal income tax purposes in the taxable year in which all the events have occurred which establish the fact of liability, the amount of the liability can be determined with reasonable accuracy, and economic performance has occurred with respect to the liability. Treas. Reg. § 1.461-1(a)(2)(i) (1992); I.R.C. § 461(h)(4). This is the so-called "all events" test.

The issue this case raises is whether the Bankruptcy Code alters the "all events" test in any manner. The court of appeals in effect decided that it did. The correct answer is that it does not.

When a bankruptcy petition is filed, the filing creates an estate comprised of certain categories of property of the debtor, regardless of where it is located and by whom it is held. 11 U.S.C.A. § 541(a) (West 1993). The property of this estate is administered and distributed to creditors in the bankruptcy case; the Bankruptcy Code imposes on all parties a distribution scheme designed to achieve both administrative convenience and equity of sharing. *See* 11 U.S.C.A. § 726(a) (West 1993). In order to foster these purposes, Congress prohibited payments from the estate for post-petition interest on claims unless and until the claims themselves are first paid. *See In re West Texas Marketing Corp. (Kellogg v.*

United States), 54 F.3d 1194, 1204 & n.8 (5th Cir. 1995) (Smith, J., dissenting) (citing extensive legislative history behind section 502(b)(2)).

This distribution scheme, however, has relevance only to the fair disposition of the property of the estate. The bankruptcy estate and the debtor are two distinct entities. The debtor has a life separate from the estate. The debtor is subject to all legal obligations it has created, and in the case of a chapter 7 corporate bankruptcy, the obligations are not eliminated by the filing of the bankruptcy. Similarly, the corporate debtor rather than the estate is the entity whose income is subject to the tax. *See* I.R.C. § 1399. Thus, the distribution scheme of sections 502 and 726 is not intended to limit the liability of the debtor, particularly as regards corporate debtors who remain liable for their debts notwithstanding a chapter 7 bankruptcy. 11 U.S.C.A. § 727(a)(1) (West Supp. 1993).

This Court has reaffirmed on several occasions that the rules regulating distribution to creditors of the assets of the bankruptcy estate do not create substantive rights but are in fact rules of convenience to aid the court in administering the rational, orderly payment of the debtor's obligations. In the case of *Vanston Bondholders Protective Comm. v. Green*, 329 U.S. 156 (1946), this Court explained that "[t]he business of bankruptcy administration is to determine how existing debts should be satisfied out of the bankrupt's estate so as to deal fairly with the various creditors. The existence of a debt between the parties to an alleged creditor-debtor relation is independent of bankruptcy and precedes it. . . . [T]he law that fixes legal consequences to transactions is the law of the several States." 329 U.S. at 169 (Frankfurter, J., concurring). Similarly, in *Nicholas v. United States*, 384 U.S. 678 (1966), this Court concluded that the accumulation of interest on

claims against a bankrupt estate is suspended as of the date the petition in bankruptcy is filed. However, "the interest-bearing quality of the debt is suspended, rather than extinguished" by the filing of the petition, and under some circumstances the accrual of the interest can continue during administration of the bankruptcy. *Id.* at 682 & n.9.

Recent cases confirm that the same result occurs under the Bankruptcy Code of 1978. *See In re Fullmer (Fullmer v. United States)*, 92-1 U.S. Tax. Cas. (CCH) ¶ 50,237 (10th Cir. Apr. 28, 1992); *In re Hanna (Hanna v. United States)*, 872 F.2d 829, 831 (8th Cir. 1989); *In re Burns (Burns v. United States)*, 887 F.2d 1541 (11th Cir. 1989). This Court has not abandoned *Vanston*. *See Bruning v. United States*, 376 U.S. at 362 n.4; *see also Grogan v. Garner*, 498 U.S. 279, 283 (1991) ("The validity of a creditor's claim is determined by rules of state law.").

In short, section 502(b)(2) of the Bankruptcy Code is a non-substantive rule; it does not void the state law right to interest but merely regulates the distributions from the estate to pay for that interest, in conjunction with the priority distribution scheme in section 726. *See In re Wilson*, 56 B.R. 693, 695 (Bankr. M.D. Ala. 1986) ("Disallowance of claims for post-petition interest is a rule of policy and convenience and not a statement of substantive law.");. 3 COLLIER ON BANKRUPTCY ¶ 502.20[2], at 34-35 (15th ed. 1995) (same).

The Fifth Circuit's prior decision in *Fahs v. Martin*, 224 F.2d 238 (5th Cir. 1955), is an appropriate application of *Vanston* in this context. In *Fahs*, a bankruptcy trustee tried to deduct interest, owed on mortgage indentures, that accrued during the bankruptcy. The government argued that the post-petition interest was not accruable and deductible for income tax purposes in view of the fact that there was little or no

likelihood that it would ever be paid. 224 F.2d at 393. The court decided, however, that the contingency as to payment of the interest did not prevent accrual of that interest. The court said that "interest on an unconditional legal obligation is deductible for income tax purposes by an accrual basis taxpayer, notwithstanding the improbability of its being paid . . . ." *Id.* at 395.

With regard to *Vanston*'s reasoning the court said that "[t]he *Vanston* case seems to us to establish a rule only for the distribution of a bankrupt's assets. It did not hold that such a claim was void, but only that the claimant should not participate in the distribution of assets until all claims superior in conscience and fairness were paid." 224 F.2d at 394. The court followed that reasoning in interpreting the Bankruptcy Code of 1978. *See United Sav. Ass'n v. Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs., Ltd. (In re Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs., Ltd.*, 793 F.2d 1380, 1386 n.5 (5th Cir. 1986) ("the petition suspended the contract right to accrue interest; it did not extinguish the right."), *reinstated*, 808 F.2d 363 (5th Cir.) (en banc), *aff'd*, 481 U.S. 1068 (1987); *see also In re Brints Cotton Mktg., Inc. (Addison v. Langston)*, 737 F.2d 1338, 1341-42 (5th Cir. 1984).

With the present decision, the court of appeals has sidestepped administrative rulings and regulations which confirm that the deduction of interest in this context is appropriate. *See, e.g.*, Rev. Rul. 70-367, 1970-2 C.B. 37; I.T. 3635, 1944 C.B. 101.

The Bankruptcy Code is designed to allow an efficient administration and equitable distribution of the bankruptcy estate. If a claim against the estate could include unmatured interest, then the claim would be changing daily, creating a nightmare of administration, because pro rata distribution to

be made on each claim would change on a day-to-day basis and on a claim-by-claim basis. Trustees either could never make a precise distribution, or they would spend inordinate money making calculations of the distributions on each distribution date. The purpose of the bankruptcy rules is to avoid this problem. The court of appeals has ignored this fundamental purpose, thereby creating the potential for problems arising from future bankruptcy administrations.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, this court should grant this petition for writ of certiorari.

Respectfully submitted,

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Appendix to
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UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 94-10089

IN THE MATTER OF:
WEST TEXAS MARKETING CORPORATION,

Debtor.

WALTER C. KELLOGG, Trustee,
West Texas Marketing Corporation,

Appellant,

VERSUS

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
(Internal Revenue Service),

Appellee.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Northern District of Texas

Before SMITH, and BARKSDALE, Circuit Judges, and FITZWATER,[1] District Judge.

RHESA HAWKINS BARKSDALE, Circuit Judge:

At issue in this Chapter 7 liquidation is whether the district court erred in holding that the estate of West Texas Marketing

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[1] District Judge of the Northern District of Texas, sitting by designation.

Corporation (WTMC), the debtor, (1) could not, for federal income tax purposes, accrue and deduct post-petition interest on undisputed and resolved general unsecured claims; and (2) was liable for a tax penalty, even though the Internal Revenue Service assessed it outside the period allowed by § 505(b) of the Bankruptcy Code. We AFFIRM.

I.

This case was tried on stipulated facts, which are developed more fully in *In re West Texas Mktg. Corp.*, 155 B.R. 399 (Bankr. N.D. Tex. 1993), and are restated here only as necessary. In 1982, WTMC filed a voluntary bankruptcy petition under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code; but, the bankruptcy court converted the case to a Chapter 7 liquidation in 1983.

In 1991, Kellogg, as trustee for the estate, filed amended tax returns for 1988 and 1989, on the basis that the estate (1) failed previously to deduct post-petition interest on undisputed and resolved general unsecured claims for 1988 and 1989; and, (2) could deduct net operating loss carryforwards based, in part, on postpetition interest for such claims for 1982 through 1987.[2] On WTMC's 1991 return, Kellogg sought also to deduct post-petition interest for such unsecured claims. The total interest expense was approximately $12.6 million, with a total refund claim of approximately $1.1 million. The IRS disallowed the refunds.

In addition, prior to the attempt to deduct post-petition interest, the IRS had assessed a penalty of approximately $23,000 against WTMC for 1989, because it failed to make estimated tax payments. Eventually, the IRS set off this penalty against a refund due WTMC for 1988.

As a result of, *inter alia*, both actions by the IRS, Kellogg filed this adversary proceeding. The bankruptcy court denied relief; the district court affirmed.

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[2] WTMC's accounting period runs from October 1 to September 30. For example, taxable year 1988 represents October 1, 1987, to September 30, 1988.

II.

A.

It goes without saying that, generally, pursuant to I.R.C. § 163, a corporation may deduct all interest paid or accrued within the taxable year on indebtedness. Kellogg maintains that WTMC's liability vel non for post-petition interest is a question of state law: that, because the unsecured claims constitute a fixed liability when the petition was filed, the Texas statutory rate of 6% establishes a present and unconditional liability for interest on those claims; and that federal law determines only the priority of how assets of the estate are to be distributed in satisfaction of the claims against it.

In *Vanston Bondholders Protective Comm. v. Green*, 329 U.S. 156 (1946), the Court recognized that "[w]hat claims of creditors are valid and subsisting obligations against the bankrupt at the time a petition in bankruptcy is filed, is a question which, in the absence of overruling federal law, is to be determined by reference to state law." *Id.* at 161 (emphasis added). Thus, the validity of any interest that may have accrued prior to the filing of the petition is resolved generally by state law. But, once the petition is filed, federal law controls. *Id.* at 163 ("[w]hen and under what circumstances federal courts will allow interest on claims against debtors' estates being administered by them has long been decided by federal law").

Sections 446(a) and 461(a) of the Internal Revenue Code provide that taxable income is computed, and deductions taken, under the accounting method that the taxpayer normally uses for his books. I.R.C. §§ 446(a), 461(a).[3] WTMC maintained its books,

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[3] I.R.C. § 446(a) provides: "Taxable income shall be computed under the method of accounting on the basis of which the taxpayer regularly computes his income in keeping his books".

I.R.C. § 461(a) provides: "The amount of any deduction or credit allowed by this subtitle shall be taken for the taxable year which is the proper taxable year under the method of accounting used in computing taxable income".

and calculated its federal income tax liability, utilizing the accrual method. Under that method, the standard for determining when an expense has been incurred for federal income tax purposes has been the "all events" test. During the years at issue, the test required that two elements be met before accrual of an expense would be allowed: first, all the events must have occurred that establish the fact of the liability; and, second, the amount of the liability must be capable of being determined with reasonable accuracy.[4] Only the first element is at issue.

"[A]lthough expenses may be deductible before they have become due and payable, liability must first be firmly established . . . . [A] taxpayer may not deduct a liability that is contingent . . . ." *United States v. General Dynamics Corp.*, 481 U.S. 239, 243 (1987); accord *United States v. Hughes Properties, Inc.* 476 U.S. 593, 600-01 (1986). In describing this noncontingent requirement, the Supreme Court has required also that the liability be "fixed and absolute", *Hughes*, 476 U.S. at 600 (quoting *Brown v. Helvering*, 291 U.S. 193, 201 (1934)), and "unconditional", *id.* (quoting *Lucas v. North Tex. Lumber Co.*, 281 U.S. 11, 13 (1930)).

The issue is not the ability *vel non* of WTMC to pay postpetition interest on the unsecured claims. *See Fahs v. Martin*, 224 F.2d 387 (5th Cir. 1955) (interest for which an accrual basis taxpayer is presently and unconditionally liable, but which is

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[4] The Treasury Regulation in force from 1982 to 1991 provided that "an expense is deductible for the taxable year in which all the events have occurred which determine the fact of the liability and the amount thereof can be determined with reasonable accuracy." Treas. Reg. § 1.461-1(a)(2) (1991). In 1992, the Regulation was modified to provide for the deduction of expenses "in the taxable year in which all the events have occurred that establish the fact of the liability, the amount of the liability can be determined with reasonable accuracy, and economic performance has occurred with respect to the liability." Treas. Reg. § 1.461-1(a)(2)(i) (1992).

unlikely to be paid by reason of his insolvency, is still deductible).[5] Rather, we must determine whether WTMC' s liability for post-petition interest is fixed, absolute, unconditional, or not subject to any contingency. SEE 2 MERTENS LAW OF FED INCOME TAX § 12A.139 (1993) ("[w]hile cases have held interest is deductible when there is improbability of payment it is well to note that in none was there any uncertainty (substantial contingency) of the liability itself").

Section 502 of the Bankruptcy Code sets forth a general rule that claims for post-petition interest are not allowed against the estate. 11 U.S.C. § 502(b)(2).[6] One of the principles underlying this provision is that "interest stops accruing at the date of the filing of the petition." H.R. REP. NO. 595, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 353 (1977), *reprinted in* 1978 U.S.C.C.A.N. 5963, 6309; S.R. REP. NO. 989, 95th Cong., 2d Sess. 63 (1978), *reprinted in* 1978 U.S.C.C. A.N. 5787, 5849; *see In re Brints Cotton Mktg., Inc.*, 737 F.2d 1338, 1341 (5th Cir. 1984) ("post-petition accumulation of interest

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[5] For all but one of the years at issue, the total undisputed and resolved claims against WTMC exceeded WTMC's assets. Thus, it was extremely unlikely that WTMC would be able to pay such claims. As noted, however, this fact is not dispositive of the issue before us.

[6] Section 502 of the Bankruptcy Code provides, in pertinent part:

> (a) A claim or interest, proof of which is filed under section 501 of this title, is deemed allowed, unless a party in interest . . . objects.
>
> (b) . . . if such an objection to a claim is made, the court, after notice and a hearing, shall determine the amount of such claim . . . and shall allow such claim in such amount, except to the extent that -
>
> . . . .
>
> (2) such claim is for unmatured interest.

11 U.S.C. § 502.

(allowable by state law) on claims against a bankrupt's estate are suspended").

The Code provides, however, for several exceptions to this general rule. Section 726(a) establishes hierarchial priorities when distributing a debtor's estate in a Chapter 7 liquidation. Included within the priorities is the payment of post-petition interest on claims against the estate if any assets remain after distributions for prioritized claims, unsecured claims, and penalties, fines, and nonpecuniary damages. 11 U.S.C. § 726(a) (5). The only distribution occupying a lower position on the hierarchy is the return of any remaining assets to the debtor.[7]

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[7] Section 726 of the Bankruptcy Code provides that:

> (a) . . . property of the estate shall be distributed—
>
> (1) first, in payment of claims of the kind specified in, and in the order specified in, section 507 of this title [(prioritized claims)];
>
> (2) second, in payment of any allowed unsecured claim, other than a claim of a kind specified in paragraph (1), (3), or (4) of this subsection
>
> (3) third, in payment of any allowed unsecured claim proof of which is tardily filed under section 501(a) of this title, other than a claim of the kind specified in paragraph 2(C) of this subsection;
>
> (4) fourth, in payment of any allowed claim, whether secured or unsecured, for any fine, penalty, or forfeiture, or for multiple, exemplary, or punitive damages, arising before the earlier of the order for relief or the appointment of a trustee, to the extent that such fine, penalty, forfeiture, or damages are not compensation for actual pecuniary loss suffered by the holder of such claim;
>
> (5) fifth, in payment of interest at the legal rate from the date of the filing of the petition, on any claim paid under paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (4) of this subsection; and
>
> (6) sixth, to the debtor.

In *Guardian Investment Corp. v. Phinney*, 253 F.2d 326 (5th Cir. 1958), a taxpayer sought to deduct interest on a second mortgage, even though no payments of principal or interest would be due until payment of the first mortgage. Additionally, according to the terms of the second mortgage, payments on it could be made only from the net proceeds of any sale of the mortgaged property. Thus, the potential existed that no payments on the second mortgage would ever be made.

Although *Guardian Investment* addressed whether the principal due on the second mortgage was contingent, it still provides a framework to consider the contingent nature of an obligation for income tax purposes.[8] In finding the indebtedness to be contingent, the *Guardian Investment* court examined five aspects of the obligation: (1) is there a fixed or determinable date of maturity; (2) is the obligation owed only upon the happening of a condition; (3) is the happening of that condition uncertain; (4) is that condition to occur in futuro; and, (5) is there a fixed or determinable liability? *Id.* at 331. Considering the aggregate of these factors, our court held that the liability on the second mortgage was not "a fixed, definite, existing obligation". *Id.*

Implicit in the obligation under § 726 to pay post-petition interest on unsecured claims is the necessary condition that sufficient assets remain following distributions under § 726 (a) (1)-(4). These distributions could not occur during the taxable years at issue, and there is no fixed or determinable date when these distributions will occur; the condition is in futuro. Because Kellogg seeks to deduct post-petition interest on undisputed claims, the amount of such liability can easily be determined. When taken in the aggregate, and based upon the principles of accrual accounting, we conclude that, under the all events tests, WTMC's

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[8] We rely upon Guardian Investment to provide structure for our analysis of the contingent nature of WTMC's liability for postpetition interest, not to command of itself the result we reach on the basis of §§ 502(b) and 726(a). We need not, therefore, concern ourselves with factual distinctions between Guardian Investment and the present case.

liability for post-petition interest has not been established. Our court recognized in *Guardian Investment* that, "if the proceeds from the sale of the mortgaged property [were] not sufficient to pay off the first mortgage, the taxpayer [would] not [be] under any obligation to pay any interest or principal of the second mortgage". *Id.* at 331. Similarly, if, in the distribution of WTMC' s assets in accordance with § 726(a) (1) - (4), all assets are depleted, then the estate will not have incurred any obligation to pay interest on unsecured claims. This is not due to the fact that payment became impossible, but because the condition necessary to create the liability for the post-petition interest failed to occur.

Accordingly, Kellogg may not now deduct post-petition interest on undisputed and resolved, general unsecured claims against the estate.[9]

B.

The other issue is whether the IRS violated the tax liability discharge provision of 11 U.S.C. § 505(b) when it assessed the estimated tax penalty for 1989 and used it as a setoff against a refund due for 1988.[10] Section 505(b) allows trustees to request

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[9] Of course, if assets remain after distributions are made pursuant to § 726(a)(1)-(4), then liability for post-petition interest will be established.

[10] As a preliminary matter, the IRS contends, erroneously, that, because the United States did not waive sovereign immunity, the district court lacked jurisdiction to consider whether WTMC was entitled to a refund for the penalty. It maintains that, as a statutory condition precedent to a refund suit, the taxpayer must file a claim for the refund.

Section 7422 of the Internal Revenue Code provides that "In]o suit or proceeding shall be maintained in any court for the recovery of any internal revenue tax . . . until a claim for refund or credit has been duly filed with the Secretary, according to the provisions of law in that regard, and the regulations of the

Secretary established in pursuance thereof". I.R.C. § 7422(a). Furthermore, Bankruptcy Code § 505(a)(2)(B) provides that a bankruptcy court may not determine

> any right of the estate to a tax refund, before the earlier of —
>
> (i) 120 days after the trustee properly requests such refund from the governmental unit from which such refund is claimed; or
>
> (ii) a determination by such governmental unit of such request.

11 U.S.C. § 505(a) (2) (B).

Between submission of briefs and oral argument, however, Congress enacted the Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1994 by which it, inter alia, abrogated expressly, and retrospectively, a claim of sovereign immunity with respect to § 505. Pub. L. No. 103-394, § 113, 108 Stat. 4106, 4117. Section 113 of the Act provides in pertinent part:

> Section 106 of title 11, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:
>
> "§ 106. Waiver of sovereign immunity
>
> "(a) Notwithstanding an assertion of sovereign immunity, sovereign immunity is abrogated as to a governmental unit to the extent set forth in this section with respect to the following:
>
> "(1) Section[ ] . . . 505 . . . of this title.
>
> "(2) The Court may hear and determine any issue arising with respect to the application of such sections to governmental units.

a determination of any unpaid tax liability from the appropriate governmental unit, and provides that, unless that entity notifies the trustee within 60 days that the return has been selected for examination, "the trustee, the debtor, and any successor to the debtor are discharged from any liability for such tax" unless the return is fraudulent or contains a material misrepresentation. 11 U.S.C. § 505(b) (emphasis added).[11] Kellogg made a § 505(b)

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108 Stat. 4106, 4117-18. And, pursuant to § 702(b)(2)(B) of the Act, this amendment is made applicable to all pending cases:

> The amendments made by sections 113 and 117 shall apply with respect to cases commenced under title 11 of the United States Code before, on, and after the date of the enactment of this Act.

108 Stat. 4106, 4150.

Although, in his rebuttal at oral argument, counsel for Kellogg noted the recent Act, neither side filed a letter citing supplemental authority as permitted by FED. R. APP. P. 28(j). We note that the Government is obviously cognizant of Rule 28(j), in that it filed a 28(j) letter on a different issue in this case. Needless to say, supplemental briefs should have been filed.

[11] Section 505(b) of the Bankruptcy Code provides:

> A trustee may request a determination of any unpaid liability of the estate for any tax incurred during the administration of the case by submitting a tax return for such tax and a request for such a determination to the governmental unit charged with responsibility for collection or determination of such tax. Unless such return is fraudulent, or contains a material misrepresentation, the trustee, the debtor, and any successor to the debtor are discharged from any liability for such tax --
>
> (1) upon payment of the tax shown on such return, if--

request, but the IRS did not assess the penalty within the 60 day limit. We must determine, therefore, whether § 505(b) bars the subsequent assessment and collection of the penalty against the estate.[12]

1.

The IRS contends that Kellogg's reliance on § 505(b) is misplaced because this issue does not involve the IRS seeking to assess or collect taxes; rather, any tax liability for the penalty has been extinguished because it was used as a setoff against the refund due for 1988. Thus, the IRS maintains, this claim is instead for a

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> (A) such governmental unit does not notify the trustee, within 60 days after such request, that such return has been selected for examination; or
>
> (B) such governmental unit does not complete such an examination and notify the trustee of any tax due, within 180 days after such request or within such additional time as the court, for cause, permits;
>
> (2) upon payment of the tax determined by the court, after notice and a hearing, after completion by such governmental unit of such examination; or
>
> (3) upon payment of the tax determined by such governmental unit to be due.

11 U.S.C. § 505(b).

[12] Kellogg challenges the underlying merits of the penalty. The only time Kellogg previously raised this issue was in a reply brief to the bankruptcy court. (It was not in the pretrial order.) It appears that the issue was not raised in, or considered by, the district court. In any event, we consider it waived.

refund, governed by § 505(a).[13]

As noted, Kellogg filed a timely return for 1989, and requested a prompt determination pursuant to § 505(b). A month later, the IRS notified Kellogg that the return had been accepted as filed and issued a refund check. But, over three months after the 1989 return was filed, the IRS notified Kellogg of the penalty and, subsequently, used it as a setoff against the refund due for 1988. If WTMC had not had that refund due, the IRS would not have been able to collect the penalty as it did. Only because the IRS found WTMC in the fortuitous position of being entitled to a refund for the prior tax year was it able to offset. Claiming that these events mandate that Kellogg is not entitled to raise a § 505(b) timeliness issue places form over substance.

2.

Under 505(b), the failure of the IRS to act in a timely manner discharges potential tax liability of, *inter alia*, the debtor and the trustee. At issue is whether this failure discharges the estate as well, under the section's nomenclature of "any successor to the debtor". This is an issue of first impression for any circuit court. Of the two lower courts to have considered directly this issue, both have held that the estate does not enjoy the discharge given to "any successor to the debtor". *In re Fondiller*, 125 B.R. 805 (N.D. Cal. 1991); *In re Rode*, 119 B.R. 697 (Bankr. E.D. Mo. 1990); *but see In re Flaherty*, 169 B.R. 267, 270 n.4 (Bankr. D.N.H. 1994) (declaring, in dictum, that "[a]lthough the actual

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[13] Section 505(a) (1) of the Bankruptcy Code provides that

> the court may determine the amount or legality of any tax, any fine or penalty relating to a tax, or any addition to tax, whether or not previously assessed, whether or not paid, and whether or not contested before and adjudicated by a judicial or administrative tribunal of competent jurisdiction.

11 U.S.C. § 505(a) (1).

wording of subsection (b) of the statute is 'the trustee, the debtor, or any successor to the debtor are discharged from any liability for such tax,' . . . this language effectively discharges the estate of the tax, as well").

It goes without saying that our interpretation of a statute begins with its language. The Bankruptcy Code defines a debtor as a "person or municipality concerning which a case under this title has been commenced", 11 U.S.C. § 101(13); and a "person" includes an "individual, partnership, and corporation". 11 U.S.C. § 101(41). Thus, a "debtor" must be an individual, partnership or corporation, and it follows that any "successor to the debtor" must also be an individual, partnership or corporation. It becomes more obvious that the estate cannot be a "successor" when we consider what is an "estate". An "estate" is created at the commencement of the bankruptcy case, and is "comprised" of, inter alia, "all legal and equitable interests of the debtor in property as of the commencement of the case". 11 U.S.C. § 541(a), (a) (1).

Furthermore, § 505(c) uses the term "estate" as distinct from the terms "debtor" and "successor to the debtor". Section 505(c) provides that, after the court makes a determination of tax under § 505, "the governmental unit charged with responsibility for collection of such tax may assess such tax against the estate, the debtor, or a successor to the debtor . . . ." Thus, the clear distinction between the "estate" and "successor to the debtor" demonstrates that Congress did not intend for the discharge of tax liability under § 505(b) to apply to the estate.

In addition to the Code's plain language, the situation faced by trustees prior to the enactment of the Bankruptcy Code illumines the purpose to be served by § 505. Prior to the Code, trustees lacked a mechanism for obtaining a prompt determination of the tax liability of the estate. Therefore, a trustee wishing to have the case closed was confronted with the choice of leaving the estate open until the IRS's opportunity to review the estate's tax expired, or proceed to have the case closed and face the potential of personal liability for additional taxes that the IRS might determine subsequently were due. Section 505(b) provided the solution to this dilemma. 1A Collier on Bankr. (MB) ¶ 12.04 [3].

> Although [§ 505(b)] was envisioned as a mechanism to permit a determination of tax liability at the conclusion of the administration of an estate, i.e., a single request for a prompt determination of all the relevant tax periods, there is nothing in its language to prevent successive requests as each tax period is completed and a return filed apart from the obligation to pay the taxes shown on such returns.

Id.

III.

For the foregoing reasons, the judgment is AFFIRMED.

JERRY E. SMITH, Circuit Judge, dissenting:

Ever since this circuit decided *Fahs v. Martin*, 224 F.2d 387 (5th Cir. 1955), the settled rule has been that an accrual basis taxpayer immediately may deduct, under the Internal Revenue Code, an expense such as interest legally owed, notwithstanding the improbability of payment. *Id.* at 393. No distinction is made between a debt backed by the full faith and credit of the United States and one owed by a creditor who has not only tottered at the brink of bankruptcy but has fallen into the chasm. The majority today would retreat from our rule in the case of interest imposed by state law during the pendency of bankruptcy ("pendency interest"). As I believe the majority misinterprets the Bankruptcy Code, extinguishes a state property right and creates a federal one, and confuses the distinction between improbable and contingent payment, I respectfully dissent.

A.

I begin by examining the source of the interest at issue. The obligation to pay interest for debts owed on contracts and accounts is a creation of the law of contract. Generally, contract law among private parties in our federalist system is state law.

Under the state law of contract here, Texas law, the background rule for debts owed on accounts and contracts is that interest at six percent will be imposed thirty days after the debt was due, unless the parties agree otherwise. TEX. REV. STAT. ANN. ART. 5069-1.03 (West 1987). The majority does not doubt that such a property right and its obligations existed prior to the imposition of bankruptcy.

The majority, however, believes that, post-petition, federal law controls. *See Vanston Bondholders Protective Comm. v. Green*, 329 U.S. 156, 163 (1946) ("When and under what circumstances federal courts will allow interest on claims against debtors' estates being administered by them has long been decided by federal law."). The majority does not specify what it means by "controls." Presumably, however, the majority means that federal law defines which debts are valid, as that was the position taken here by the government and bankruptcy court below. *See Kellogg v. United States (In re West Texas Mktg. Corp.)*, 155 B.R. 399, 402 (Bankr. N.D. Tex. 1993) (positing that both state and federal law are "sources of liability for postpetition interest on general unsecured claims"). This view is only half right.

The federal law of bankruptcy is not designed to create debts among parties but to determine how existing debts should be distributed to creditors fairly. Justice Frankfurter's concurrence in *Vanston* explains as much:

> The business of bankruptcy administration is to determine how existing debts should be satisfied out of the bankrupt's estate so as to deal fairly with the various creditors. The existence of a debt between the parties to an alleged creditor-debtor relation is independent of bankruptcy and precedes it. Parties are in a bankruptcy court with their rights and duties already established, except insofar as they subsequently arise during the course of bankruptcy administration or as part of its conduct. Obligations to be satisfied out of the bankrupt's estate thus arise, if at all, out of tort or contract or other relationship created under applicable law. And the law that fixes legal consequences to transactions is the law of the several States.

Vanston, 329 U.S. at 169 (Frankfurter, J., concurring); *see also id.* at 161 ("What claims of creditors are valid and subsisting obligations against the bankrupt at the time a petition in bankruptcy is filed is a question which, in the absence of overruling federal law, is to be determined by reference to state law.") (Black, J.) (majority opinion); *Grogan v. Garner*, 498 U.S. 279, 283 (1991) ("The validity of a creditor's claim is determined by rules of state law.").

This point bears stressing. Nothing in the Bankruptcy Code awards damages for failure to deliver goods or injury from the negligent operation of a vehicle. Nor does it create the right to collect interest from an unpaid debt.

Bankruptcy law does control in the sense that courts ultimately may not enforce such rights in carrying out their constitutional and statutory obligations. As Justice Frankfurter continued:

> Of course a State may affix to a transaction an obligation which the courts of other States or the federal courts need not enforce because of overriding considerations of policy. And so, in the proper adjustment of the rights of creditors and the desire to rehabilitate the debtor, Congress under its bankruptcy power may authorize its courts to refuse to allow existing debts to be proven.

Vanston, 329 U.S. at 169. Thus, a state-law debt may enter the controls of the Bankruptcy Code as valid, but ultimately may not be enforced if the bankruptcy court, through its congressionally granted equitable powers, determines otherwise. *See Fahs*, 224 F.2d at 395 ("[W]e interpret [*Vanston*] only as establishing the equitable power and duty of bankruptcy courts to subordinate such a claim.").[1]

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[1] In *Fahs*, we further explained our position, stating:

> The majority opinion [in *Vanston*] may be reconciled with [the concurrence's] unquestionably

B.

I have stressed the distinction between state property law and federal bankruptcy law in some detail, as that distinction is critical in understanding how federal bankruptcy law "controls" here. Kellogg's state law obligation to pay interest on its overdue debts pre-dates the imposition of bankruptcy. Now, the question we must answer is when, in the bankruptcy proceedings, such a state law right is extinguished.

Turning to the Bankruptcy Code, I note that section 502(a), 11 U.S.C. § 502(a), provides, in pertinent part, that a claim is allowed unless a party in interest objects. Upon objection, section 502(b) provides, in relevant part, that "the court, after notice and a hearing, shall determine the amount of such a claim . . . and shall allow such a claim in such amount except to the extent that— . . . (2) such a claim is for unmatured interest." This section is a codification of the pre-Code rule that courts need not recognize the

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> correct principles only if it is regarded, as we regard it, as not declaring the obligation (regardless of validity under state law) void, but merely as subordinating it.

224 F.2d at 395 n.5. *See also Pepper v. Litton*, 308 U.S. 295, 310-12 (1939) (holding that bankruptcy court has equitable power to disallow or subordinate state judgment); *Addison v. Langston (In re Brints Cotton Mktg., Inc.)*, 737 F.2d 1338, 1341-42 (5th Cir. 1984) ("(W]hile state law ordinarily determines what claims of creditors are valid and subsisting obligations, a bankruptcy court is entitled (if authorized by the federal bankruptcy statute) to determine how and what claims are allowable for bankruptcy purposes, in order to accomplish the statutory purpose of advancing a ratable distribution of assets among the creditors."); *see generally* 3 DANIEL COWANS, COWAN'S BANKRUPTCY LAW AND PRACTICE § 12.7, at 39-40 (1994) (examining interrelationship of state law claims and "allowability" under the Bankruptcy Code).

accrual of interest during the pendency of bankruptcy.[2] When read in isolation, the plain language of § 502(b)(2) appears to extinguish a creditor's right to earn interest and a debtor's obligation to pay it.

A court's duty in interpreting the Bankruptcy Code, however, is to read the statute holistically. *United Sav. Ass'n v. Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs.*, Ltd., 484 U.S. 365, 371 (1988). As the majority recognizes, Congress has codified an exception to the general rule.[3] Section 726(a) of the Bankruptcy Code, which controls the order of distribution in chapter 7 cases, mandates to the court that the property of the estate shall be distributed-

> (5) fifth, in payment of interest at the legal rate from the date of the filing of the petition, on any claim paid under paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (4) of this subsection . . . .

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[2] *See Sexton v. Dreyfus*, 219 U.S. 339, 344-46 (1911) (examining origins of American rule derived from English bankruptcy system); *see also Thomas v. Western Car Co.*, 149 U.S. 95, 116-17 (1893) (recognizing rule); *American Iron & Steel Mfg. Co. v. Seaboard Air Line Ry.*, 233 U.S. 261, 266-67 (1914) (recognizing rule and exceptions); *City of New York v. Saper*, 336 U.S. 328, 330 & n.7 (1949) (same).

[3] In fact, the Code provides at least three exceptions. Section 726(a) (5) is discussed in the text. Section 506(b) allows interest to a secured creditor to the extent the secured property is greater than the amount of the claim. *See United States v. Ron Pair Enters.,Inc.*, 489 U.S. 235, 245-46 (1989) (interpreting § 506 (b)). Section 1124 specifically permits reinstatement of a debt according to its original contractual terms if the debtor brings current the payments of principal and interest accrued during bankruptcy. *See United Sav. Ass'n v. Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs.. Ltd. (In re Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs.. Ltd.)*, 808 F.2d 363, 380 (5th Cir. 1987) (*en banc*) (Jones, J., dissenting), *aff'd*, 484 U.S. 365, 371 (1988).

This rule, like that codified in § 502(b) (2), claims an impressive pedigree from a long line of pre-Code decisions. *See, e.g.* 2 WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, COMMENTARIES *488 ("[T]hough the usual rule is, that all interest on debts carrying interest shall cease from the time of issuing the commission, yet, in the case of a surplus left after payment of every debt, such interest shall revive, and be chargeable to the bankrupt or his representatives.").[4] Its effect is that when sufficient assets remain in the estate after prior distributions, the bankruptcy court is required to pay the creditors interest.[5] The only lower distribution returns the remaining assets to the debtor. § 726(a) (6).

Accordingly, throughout bankruptcy, the debtor retains the obligation to pay its creditors interest. When sufficient assets remain upon distribution, the court *must* provide for the payment of interest. No doubt the creditors would insist on as much. And,

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[4] Thus, while pre-Code precedent supports the argument that interest stops running when a bankruptcy petition is filed, *Sexton*, 219 U.S. at 344, this practice was not absolute. Two, if not three, exceptions were recognized. *See Ron Pair*, 489 U.S. at 246. The two well-recognized rules were: If the alleged bankrupt proved solvent, creditors received post-bankruptcy interest before any surplus was returned to the bankrupt; and if securities of the bankrupt produced interest or dividends during bankruptcy, such amounts were supplied to post -bankruptcy interest. *Saver*, 336 U.S. at 330 n.7. Of more doubtful origin, under pre-Code precedent, was an exception for oversecured claims. *Ron Pair*, 489 U.S. at 246.

[5] Because § 726(a) (5) states that the interest should be set "at the legal rate," Texas state law determines the existence and amount of interest. *See generally Chaim J. Fortgang & Lawrence P. King, The 1978 Bankruptcy Code: Some Wrong Policy Decisions*, 56 N.Y.U.L. Rev. 1148, 1151-52 (1981) (discussing whether "legal rate" means statutory rate or rate set by contracts). As no rate was set by the contracts here, this problem is not presented.

while actual payment may be unlikely, the obligation to pay is not. Such an obligation, therefore, is not extinguished, but, for purposes of the bankruptcy proceedings, is ignored until the time the court determines whether the debtor's assets can meet the obligation.[6] Only upon discharge, *see* § 727, is the state law obligation to pay extinguished.

This result occurs because § 502(b)(2) is a matter of convenience, not substantive law.[7]

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[6] Courts in applying the general rule of 502(b) (2) have used various terms to describe its effect: Interest is "suspended," *Nicholas v. United States*, 384 U.S. 678, 682 & n.9 (1966), ceases to run, *Ron Pair*, 489 U.S. at 246, stops, *Saper*, 336 U.S. at 330, is "not computed," *Sexton*, 219 U.S. at 344, and is not allowed, *Vanston*, 329 U.S. at 163. The exact terminology, while important, does not overcome the requirements of the Bankruptcy Code, however. As discussed below, where the Code provides an exception to the general rule, the right to the interest continues to exist.

[7] The leading commentary on bankruptcy has recognized as much:

> (C] are must be taken not to confuse tax accrual concepts and payment in a title 11 context. Section 502(b)(2) of the Bankruptcy Code prescribes the grounds for objecting to claims in a title 11 case. By itself, it does not change the legal rights of the holder of an obligation against the debtor. Put another way, the general rule in title 11 cases that there is no accrual of postpetition interest is a rule of convenience governing *distributions* to creditors. It is not a rule of substantive law that converts an interest-bearing indebtedness to a nonenforceable, non-interest-bearing indebtedness. Even *In re Continental Vending Mach. Corp.*, [77-1 U.S. Tax Cas. (CCH) ¶ 9,121, at 86,093 (E.D.N.Y. 1976)], which is often cited for the opposite position against tax accrual of post-petition interest, state unequivocally:

That section is premised upon the idea of making bankruptcy proceedings easier and fairer to administer, not replacing state property law with federal. The Supreme Court explained the pre-Code justification of the rule thus:

> Accrual of simple interest on unsecured claims in bankruptcy was prohibited in order that the administrative inconvenience of continuous recomputation of interest causing recomputation of claims could be avoided. Moreover, different creditors whose claims bore diverse interest rates or were paid by the bankruptcy court on different dates would suffer neither gain nor loss caused solely by delay.

Vanston, 329 U.S. at 164. Nothing in the text or the legislative history of this section of the Bankruptcy Code, which admits to codifying much of the pre-Code practice, suggests that Congress adopted this rule for any other purpose. *See* John C. McCoid, II, *Pendency Interest in Bankruptcy*, 68 Am. Bankr. L.J. 1, 9 (1994) ("Though Congress said more this time, there is nothing in the legislative history that indicates any intention to effect any change in the law on the subject of pendency interest by virtue of these

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> A bankruptcy petition, whether straight or a corporate reorganization, . . . suspends or postpones the accrual of interest even though the "claim has not lost its interest-bearing quality."
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> *Id.* at 86,097-98 (citing 6A Colliers on Bankruptcy § 9.08, at 194 (14th ed.)).

1 ELLIOTT G. FREIER, ET AL., COLLIERS ON BANKRUPTCY ¶ 22.05, at 22-40 (Lawrence P. King ed., 15th ed. 1988) [hereinafter COLLIERS ON BANKRUPTCY]; *see also* 3 COLLIERS ON BANKRUPTCY *supra*, ¶ 502.02[2] (discussing general principles of bankruptcy as applied to unmatured interest).

sections.").[8]

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[8] Indeed, the legislative history in the Senate and House reports accompanying the Bankruptcy Act of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-598, 92 Stat. 2549, shows that the current Bankruptcy Code enacted much of the pre-Code rules regarding pendency interest. *See* S. Rep. No. 989, 95th Cong., 2d Sess. 62-63 (1978), *reprinted in* 1978 U.S.C.C.A.N. 5787, 5848-89 (stating that § 502(b) (2) contains "two principles of current law," including rule that unmatured interest is disallowed); H. Rep. No. 595, 95th Cong., 1st Sess., 352-53 (1977), *reprinted in* 1978 U.S.C.C.A.N. 5963, 6308 (same); S. Rep. No. 989, 95th Cong., 2d Sess. 97 (1978), *reprinted in* 1978 U.S.C.C.A.N. 5787, 5883 (stating that § 726(a)(4) provides that punitive penalties are subrogated to all other claims, "except interest accruing during the case"; § 726(a)(5) provides for post-petition interest where assets remain); H. Rep. No. 595, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 383 (1977), *reprinted in* 1978 U.S.C.C.A.N. 5963, 6339 (same); *see also* Report of the Committee of Finance, S. Rep. No. 95-1106, 95th Cong., 2d Sess. 22-23 (1978), *reprinted in 3* app. Colliers on Bankruptcy, *supra*, at Tab VI (recognizing "subordination rule" for post-petition interest and recommending that tax liens and interest be "non-dischargeable"). A search of the Congressional Record reveals no discussion or even language suggesting that the pre-Code rules should be discarded or *Vanston* legislatively overturned. *See* 124 Cong. Rec. 1783 (1978); 124 Cong. Rec. 32,383 (1978); 124 Cong. Rec. 34,143 (1978); 124 Cong. Rec. 28,257 (1978). Finally, the suggested bill contained in the report of the Commission of the Bankruptcy Laws of the United States, which provided much of the legislative impetus for the 1978 Act, provided an explicit provision for the payment of interest. McCoid, *supra*, at 8-9 (citing Report of the Commission on the Bankruptcy Laws of the United States § 4-405(a) (8), H.R. Doc. No. 137, 93d Cong. 1st Sess., Part II, at 110 (1973)).

I have examined the legislative history to show that the majority's reliance upon the Senate and House reports discussing § 502(b) (2) is incomplete. That section must be read in context with the other sections of the Code, their legislative history, and the

Moreover, our precedent and Supreme Court caselaw conclude that § 502 (b) does not void the state property interests, but only ignores it until distribution as a matter of policy. In *Fahs*, we stated that

> [t]he *Vanston* case seems to us to establish a rule only for the distribution of a bankrupt's assets. It did not hold that such a claim was void, but only that the claimant should not participate in the distribution of assets until all claims superior in conscience and fairness were paid.

224 F.2d at 394. We have followed this reasoning in applying the current Bankruptcy Code. *See United Sav. Ass'n v. Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs., Ltd. (In re Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs., Ltd.*, 793 F.2d 1380, 1386 n.5 (5th Cir. 1986) ("Put differently, the petition *suspended* the contract right to accrue interest; it did not *extinguish* the right."), *reinstated*, 808 F.2d 363 (5th Cir.), (en banc), *aff'd*, 481 U.S. 1068 (1987).

Likewise, the Supreme Court has continued to adhere to *Vanston*.[9] In sum, § 502(b) (2), as a non-substantive rule, does not void the state right to interest, but merely limits its eventual

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pre-Code practice that the Code adopted.

[9] *See Nicholas v. United States*, 384 U.S. 678, 689 (1966) (quoting *Vanston* passage with approval); *Bruning v. United States*, 376 U.S. 362, 362 n.4 (1964) (same): *American Iron*, 233 U.S. at 266 (explaining that the pre-code rule applies, "not because the claims had lost their interest-bearing quality during [receivership], but [because it] is a necessary and enforced rule of distribution, due to the fact that in case of receiverships the assets are generally insufficient to pay debts in full."): 3 Collier on Bankruptcy, *supra*, ¶ 502.2[2], at 34-34.1 (noting that § 502(b)(2)'s "disallowance of claims for unmatured interest or claims accruing after the date of the filing of the petition is one of policy and convenience rather than a statement of substantive law").

distribution.

While the majority does not say so explicitly, it treats section 502(b) as a substantive rule. According to the majority, the non-contingent, state-law obligation to pay pendency interest becomes "contingent" upon the filing of the bankruptcy petition. The majority does not mean that *payment* is contingent, as sufficient funds must remain in order for the debt to be paid. Rather, reasoning that the ultimate distribution of any interest is contingent upon there being assets remaining in the estate to pay it, the majority holds that "the condition necessary to create the *liability* for the post-petition interest failed to occur." (Emphasis added). *See also* 2 JACOB MERTENS, JR., MERTENS LAW OF FEDERAL INCOME TAX § 12A.138, at 253 (1994) ("The liability ceases to exist when the property of the corporation passes into the receiver's hands.").

In effect, the majority snuffs out the state-law obligation to pay interest and reimposes it at the end of distribution only upon the contingency that assets remain. The majority thus presents two difficult conceptual problems that it does not address. First, the majority does not explain what the source of this interest would be upon distribution. Does the majority believe that § 726(a) (5) is an independent source for a federal property right? Second, if the source of the right is Texas state property law, how is the risk of ultimate distribution under § 726(a) (5) different from the risk of distribution of any debt in bankruptcy?

The majority's non-answer to these difficult questions is to resort to one case, *Guardian Inv. Corp. v. Phinney*, 253 F.2d 326 (5th Cir. 1958), which it claims "provides a framework to consider the contingent nature of an obligation for income tax purposes." Perhaps *Guardian* does, but that case is easily distinguishable from the situation here, as in *Guardian* the obligation to pay the debt, a second mortgage, was contingent by the terms of the agreement itself. Here, the state property right is not contingent by its terms. Moreover, *Guardian* does not even mention the Bankruptcy Code. A 1958 case that fails even to mention the Bankruptcy Code can be of little assistance in interpreting the current Code, substantially codified in 1978. Its application is simply an anachronism.

Rather than wander so far afield and out of time, I would

turn to the current Bankruptcy Code and interpret the interplay between §§ 502(b) (2) and 726(a) (5) as settling a scheme for distribution of the fixed obligation to pay interest. Section 502 (b) (2), which directs courts to ignore pendency interest, codifies a rule of convenience in order to ease the administration of the bankruptcy process. Section 726 (a) (5) preserves the debtor's obligation to pay this debt as a matter of fairness to the creditors.

This interpretation of the Bankruptcy Code is consistent with the language of the statute, pre-Code caselaw, the legislative history, the view of the leading commentary on bankruptcy, and, not least of all, our precedent.[10] In sum, Kellogg retains the *obligation* to pay pendency interest. The remaining question is whether the improbability of payment prevents Kellogg from deducting the interest.

C.

Finally, I return to an application of *Fahs*, in which a bankruptcy trustee attempted to deduct interest owed on mortgage indentures that accrued during the pendency of bankruptcy. The government objected, in part, on the ground that the interest was "not accruable and deductible for income tax purposes in view of the fact that there is little or no likelihood that it will ever be paid." 224 F.2d at 393. We, however, held that "interest on an unconditional legal obligation is deductible for income tax purposes by an accrual basis taxpayer, notwithstanding the improbability of its being paid . . . ." *Id.* at 395.

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[10] Even the Tax Court has recognized the continuing validity of *Fahs*. *See, Southeastern Mail Trans. Inc. v. Commissioner*, 63 T.C.M. (CCH) 2893, 2905-06 (1992). Apparently, it is also consistent with earlier IRS policy. *See, e.g.*, Rev. Rul. 70-367, 1970-2 C.B. 37 (1970) (holding that interest accrued for obligations of debtor corporation undergoing reorganization under Bankruptcy Act). "The doubt as to the payment of such interest is not a contingency of a kind that postpones the accrual of the liability until the contingency is resolved." *Id.*

Contrary to the holding of the bankruptcy court here, *Fahs* remains the law of this circuit.[11] Even the Tax Court has recognized the continuing validity of *Fahs*. *See Southeastern Mail Transp. Inc. v. Commissioner*, 63 T.C.M. (CCH) 2893, 2905-06 (1992).[12] The majority opinion accepts as much.

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[11] *See e.g., Tampa & Gulf Coast R.R. v. Commissioner*, 469 F.2d 263, 264 (5th Cir. 1972); *Lawyer's Title Guar. Fund v. United States*, 508 F.2d 1, 6 (5th Cir. 1975) ("The law also is that a bare possibility of non-payment or delay in payment because of the principal's financial condition does not defeat accrual either."); *W.S. Badock Corp. v. Commissioner*, 491 F.2d 1226, 1228 (5th Cir. 1974) (recognizing rule that risk of collection does not defeat fixed liability for accrual purposes). The government does correctly note that we have created an exception to the rule in *Fahs*. Where there is no possibility of eventual payment, no obligation is fixed, and therefore an interest deduction is improper. In *Tampa & Gulf Coast R.R.*, 469 F.2d at 264, for example, we recognized the general principle of *Fahs* but held that it had to give way to extreme circumstances of the case before it. In *Tampa*, a parent and subsidiary corporation had created a tax shelter where the rent payments from the parent to the subsidiary were offset by accrued but unpaid interest payments on debts to the parent. The court found that *Fahs* did not apply, as the debt would never be paid on account of the beneficial tax relationship between the corporations.

[12] Even the Tax Court, at times, appears to apply an approach similar to, but more restrictive than, *Fahs*. *See Cohen v. Commissioner*, 21 T.C. 855, 857 (1954) (holding that deductions are proper, except where interest "categorically" will not be paid); *Jordon v. Commissioner*, 11 T.C. 914, 925 (1948) (same); *see also Zimmerman Steel Co. v. Commissioner*, 45 B.T.A. 1041 (1941) (outlining general approach), *rev'd*, 130 F.2d 113 (8th Cir. 1952). The Third Circuit apparently has acquised in the Tax Court's approach. *See Pearlman v. Commissioner*, 153 F.2d 560, 563 (3d Cir. 1946) (affirming Tax Court decision reported at 4 T. C. 34 (1944) that applies Tax Court's interpretation of *Zimmerman*).

The justification for the *Fahs* rule is simple. As every debt is subject to the risk of non-payment, a rule requiring absolute certainty of repayment as a prerequisite to accruing and deducting interest would make I.R.C. § 163 a nullity. No one could rely upon the accrual method. The *Fahs* court accordingly focused instead upon the obligation to pay. To be able to deduct a debt under the accrual method and the "all events" test, there only must be a fixed and unconditional obligation to pay. Accordingly, the validity of that obligation is measured at the time it is fixed, not at the future date it should be paid.

Here, there is no dispute that the unsecured debts are valid obligations to which Texas state law attaches the obligation to pay[13] interest after they are thirty days overdue. While the imposition of bankruptcy is probative of the uncertainty concerning the payment of the pendency interest, there is no allegation by the government, or concession by Kellogg, that the interest debt will never be paid. As long as the debt could be paid, the obligation remains. I would hold that the deduction was proper, and the

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The Eighth Circuit, the Eleventh Circuit, and the Court of Federal Claims, however, follow the rule we adopted in *Fahs*. *See Keebey's Inc. v. Paschal*, 188 F.2d 113, 115-16 (8th Cir. 1951); *Zimmerman Steel Co. v. Commissioner*, 130 F.2d 1011, 1012 (8th Cir. 1942); *Sartin v. United States*, 5 Cl. Ct. 172, 176 (1984) (citing *Fahs* rule with approval); cf. *Bonner v. City of Prichard*, 661 F.2d 1206, 1207 (11th Cir. 1981) (en banc) (holding that Fifth Circuit precedent prior to circuit split is binding on the Eleventh Circuit). The leading case not following *Fahs* originates from a district court in the Second Circuit. *See In re Continental Vending Mach. Corp.*, 77-1 U.S. Tax Cas. (CCH) ¶ 9121 (E.D.N.Y. 1976).

[13] *See* I.R.C. §§ 163, 461; Treas. Reg. § 1.461-1(a) (2); *see also United States v. Hughes Properties, Inc.*, 476 U.S. 593, 600 (1986) ("[T]o satisfy the all-events test, a liability must be final and definite in amount, must be fixed and absolute, and must be unconditional").

bankruptcy court erred in refusing to follow *Fahs*.[14] Accordingly, I respectfully dissent.

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[14] As this result would moot the 11 U.S.C. § 505(b) issue, I do not address it.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEAS
ABILENE DIVISION

In re:	§	
	§	
West Texas Marketing	§	Case No. 182-10034-7
Corporation,	§	
	§	
Debtor.	§	

* * *

Walter C. Kellogg, Trustee	§	Adversary No. 192-1018
for West Texas Marketing	§	
Corporation,	§	
	§	
Appellant,	§	
v.	§	
	§	
United States of America,	§	
	§	Civil Action No.
Appellee.	§	1:93-CV-124-C

APPEAL FROM THE
UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
JOHN C. AKARD, BANKRUPTCY JUDGE, PRESIDING

* * *

ORDER

This case is before the court for consideration of the appeal of the Trustee, Walter C. Kellogg, from an order of the bankruptcy court dated June 22, 1993.

Appellant claims two points of error: (1) whether the bankruptcy court erred in disallowing the estate to accrue post-petition interest expense for federal income tax deduction purposes on undisputed and resolved general unsecured pre-petition claims; and (2) whether the bankruptcy court erred in holding 11 U.S.C. § 505(b) does not bar the assessment of an estimated tax penalty against the bankruptcy although the IRS failed to assess the penalty within 60 days of the trustee's request for determination.

This court must review the bankruptcy court's conclusions of law *de novo*. *Sutton v. Bank One, Texas, N.A.*, 904 F.2d 327, 329 (5th Cir. 1990). The findings of fact of the bankruptcy court may not be set aside unless they are clearly erroneous. The court has considered carefully the written arguments of counsel and the record in this case and is of the opinion that the decision of the bankruptcy court should be affirmed. The findings of fact are not clearly erroneous. There is no reversible error in the conclusions of law.

If is, accordingly, ordered that the decision of the bankruptcy court is, in all things, **AFFIRMED**.

The clerk shall furnish a copy of this order to each attorney of record.

Dated December 20, 1993.

s/Sam R. Cummings
SAM R. CUMMINGS
United States District Judge

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
ABILENE DIVISION

In re:	§	in Proceedings Under
	§	Chapter 7 of the
	§	Bankruptcy Code
West Texas Marketing	§	Case No. 182-10034-7
Corporation,	§	
	§	
Debtor.	§	
	§	

Walter Kellogg, Trustee for	§	
West Texas Marketing	§	
Corporation,	§	
	§	
Plaintiff,	§	
	§	
vs.	§	Adversary No. 192-1018
	§	
United States of America,	§	
	§	
Defendant.	§	

ORDER DENYING TRUSTEE'S MOTION TO DETERMINE TAX LIABILITY AND TO RECOVER TAX REFUND

On April 23, 1992, West Texas Marketing Corp.'s (WTMC) trustee moved pursuant to Bankruptcy Code § 505(a) to compel this court to determine the federal income tax liability of WTMC's estate. The Motion also sought the recovery of a federal income tax refund setoff by the IRS against an estimated tax claim. For reasons stated in the Memorandum of Opinion on Postpetition Interest on Unsecured Claims of even date herewith, it is the opinion of the court that the Motion should be denied.

It is therefore ORDERED that the aforesaid Motion filed by WTMC's trustee is denied.

DATED: June 22, 1993

s//John C. Akard
JOHN C. AKARD, BANKRUPTCY JUDGE

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
ABILENE DIVISION

In re:	§	in Proceedings Under
	§	Chapter 7 of the
	§	Bankruptcy Code
West Texas Marketing	§	Case No. 182-10034-7
Corporation,	§	
	§	
Debtor.	§	
	§	

Walter Kellogg, Trustee for	§	
West Texas Marketing	§	
Corporation,	§	
	§	
Plaintiff,	§	
	§	
vs.	§	Adversary No. 192-1018
	§	
United States of America,	§	
	§	
Defendant.	§	

MEMORANDUM OF OPINION ON POSTPETITION INTEREST ON UNSECURED CLAIMS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

I. Whether in a case under Chapter 7 of the Bankruptcy Code,[1] the Debtor can accrue postpetition interest expense

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[1] The Bankruptcy Code is 11 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.* Unless otherwise noted, references to section numbers are references to sections in the Bankruptcy Code.

deductions for federal income tax purposes on undisputed and resolved general unsecured repetition) claims. The court concludes that the Debtor cannot accrue postpetition interest expense on prepetition claims for federal income tax purposes.[2]

II. Whether § 505(b) bars assessment of an estimated tax penalty on the Debtor's estate because the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) assessed the penalty more than 60 days after the estate requested a prompt determination of unpaid tax liability and did not select the Debtor's income tax return for examination. The court concludes that We IRS assessment of the estimated tax penalty was proper, that § 505(b) does not bar collection, and that the Debtor's estate is liable for the penalty.

FACTS[3]

West Texas Marketing Corporation (WTMC) is incorporated under the laws of Texas. WTMC maintained its accounting records and calculated its federal income tax liability using the accrual method of accounting. On May 14, 1982, WTMC filed a voluntary petition under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code. On December 7, 1983, the court converted WTMC's reorganization to a Chapter 7 liquidation. Plaintiff did not accrue interest expense deductions for WTMC's undisputed and resolved general unsecured (prepetition) claims on the U.S. Corporation Income Tax Returns (Forms 1120) filed for WTMC's taxable year(s) ended (TYE) September 30, 1982 through September 30, 1989.

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[2] This court has jurisdiction over this matter under 28 U.S.C. § 1334, 28 U.S.C. § 157(a), and Miscellaneous Rule No. 33 of the Northern District of Texas contained in Order of Reference of Bankruptcy Cases and Proceedings *Nunc Pro Tunc* dated August 31, 1984. This a core proceeding pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 157(b)(2)(A), (B), and (O).

[3] The court adopts the parties' Stipulated Facts filed on November 5, 1992. The court will state only such facts as are necessary to an understanding of its decision.

Plaintiff reflected postpetition interest expense deductions on prepetition claims on WTMC's Amended U.S. Corporation Income Tax Returns (Forms 1120X) for TYE September 30, 1988 and September 30, 1989. Likewise, part of the net operating loss (NOL) deductions claimed on WTMC's Forms 1120X for TYE September 30, 1988 and September 30, 1989 were the result of accruals of interest expense for WTMC's prepetition claims for WTMC's TYE September 30, 1982 through September 30, 1987.

On WTMC's Forms 1120X for TYE September 30, 1988, September 30, 1989, and September 30, 1991, Plaintiff computed postpetition interest expense deductions on its prepetition claims using the six percent Texas "legal rate."

During WTMC's TYE September 30,1982 through September 30,1987, and September 30, 1989 through September 30, 1991, total filed claims, as well as undisputed and resolved claims in WTMC's bankruptcy proceedings alone, exceeded WTMC's assets. On the other hand, during WTMC's TYE September 30,1988, WTMC's assets exceeded undisputed and unsecured claims but not total filed claims.

On June 15, 1990, Plaintiff timely tiled a Form 1120 for WTMC's TYE September 30, 1989 reflecting a tax liability of $366,468, payments of $367,000, and requested a refund of $532, the difference between the two amounts. This Form 1120 reported that WTMC was not liable for any estimated tax penalties. Also, Plaintiff filed this Form 1120 with a request for prompt determination pursuant to § 505(b).

On July 17, 1990 the IRS accepted WTMC's Form 1120 for TYE September 30, 1989 as filed. This IRS acceptance of WTMC's Form 1120 for the TYE September 30, 1989, meant that the IRS did not select the tax return for examination.

On October 1,1990, the IRS assessed an estimated tax penalty of $23,044.58 against WTMC for its TYE September 30, 1989, because WTMC did not make estimated tax payments for that taxable year as required by law. On November 4, 1991, the IRS set off the $23,044.58 against a refund due to WTMC for TYE September 30, 1988. On October 25, 1991, Plaintiff timely filed a Form 1120X for WTMC's TYE September 30, 1988, which reflects previously unreported interest expense deductions and constituted

a claim for refund in the amount of $1,999,887. Such figure also included two allowed deductions by the IRS: $39,910 for previously omitted percentage depletion deductions and a $1,270,185 NOL carryback.

On the same date, Plaintiff timely filed a Form 1120X for WTMC's TYE September 30, 1989, which reflected postpetition unreported interest expense deductions on prepetition claims and constituted a claim for refund in the amount of $366,468, the tax liability originally reported on Form 1120. Oh November 6, 1991, Plaintiff timely filed a Form 1120 for WTMC's TYE September 30, 1991 reflecting no tax liability. The IRS timely notified Plaintiff that the IRS selected WTMC's Form 1120 for that period for examination.

On or about January 31, 1992, the District Director of Internal Revenue mailed Plaintiff a Notice of Determination of Additional Tax and Disallowance of Refund Claims. The IRS notice disallowed WTMC's refund claims in Forms 1120X for TYE September 30, 1988 and September 30, 1989 for postpetition interest expense deductions on prepetition claims. Additionally, the IRS notice informed Plaintiff that IRS had determined WTMC owed $83,885 in additional taxes for September 30,1991.

POSITIONS OF THE PARTIES

I. Plaintiff argued that postpetition interest accrues on allowed prepetition claims at the "legal rate" pursuant to § 726(a)(5). Alternatively, Plaintiff argued that state law determines the validity of creditors' claims ad that the claims bear interest at the statutory rate. Therefore, Plaintiff sought to recover refunds and corresponding interest on federal taxes overpaid by WTMC to the IRS for September 30, 1988 and September 30, 1989. Additionally, Plaintiff disputed the IRS determination of additional federal income tax due for WTMC's TYE September 30, 1991 based on the same arguments discussed above.

The IRS argued that WTMC could not accrue interest expense deductions for federal income tax purposes for its prepetition claims in any of WTMC's taxable years ending September 30, 1982 through 1991.

II. Pursuant to § 505(b), Plaintiff sought to compel the turnover of a portion of an approved refund of federal income taxes for WTMC's TYE September 30, 1988 erroneously set off against an improper assessment of estimated tax penalties for WTMC's TYE September 30, 1989.

The IRS contended that assessment and collection of the estimated tax penalty for WTMC's -TYE September 30, 1989 was proper and was not barred by § 505(b).

STATUTES

11 U.S.C. § 501 states in pertinent part:

> (a) A creditor or an indenture trustee may file a proof of claim.

11 U.S.C. § 502 states in pertinent part:

> (a) A claim . . . filed under § 501 of this title, is deemed allowed, unless a party in interest. . . objects.
>
> (b) [Ilf such objection to a claim is made, the court . . . shall allow such claim in such amount except to the extent that—
>
> . . .
>
> (2) such claim is for unmatured interest.

11 U.S.C. § 505(b) states in pertinent part:

> (b) A trustee may request a determination of any unpaid liability of the estate for any tax incurred during the administration of the case. . . Unless such return is fraudulent, or contains a material misrepresentation, the trustee, the debtor, and any successor to the debtor are discharged from any liability for such tax—
>
> (1) upon payment of the tax shown on such return if—

(A) such governmental unit does not notify the trustee, within 60 days after such request, that such return has been selected for examination.

11 U.S.C. § 726 states in pertinent part:

(a) [P]roperty of the estate shall be distributed-

. . .

(5) fifth, in payment of interest at the legal rate from the date of the filing of the petition on any claim paid under paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (4) of this subsection.

Tex. Rev. Civ. Stat. Ann. art. 5069-1.03 states:

When no specified rate of' interest is agreed upon by the parties, interest at the rate of six percent per annum shall be allowed on all accounts and contracts ascertaining the sum payable, commencing on the thirtieth (30th) day from and after the time when the sum is due and payable.

I.R.C. § 163(a) states in pertinent part:

(a) There shall be allowed as a deduction all interest paid or accrued within the taxable year on indebtedness.

I.R.C. § 448 states in pertinent part:

(a) [Iln the case of a —

(1) C corporation,

. . .

taxable income shall not be computed under the cash receipts and disbursements method of accounting.

I.R.C. § 461(b) states in pertinent part:

> (1) [I]n determining whether an amount has been incurred with respect to any item during any taxable year, the all events test shall not be treated as met any earlier than when economic performance with respect to such item occurs.

Treas. Reg. § 1.461-1(a)(2)(i) states:

> (2) Taxpayer using an accrual method—(i) In general. Under an accrual method of accounting, a liability . . . is incurred, and generally is taken into account for Federal income tax purposes, in the taxable year in which all the events have occurred that establish the fact of the liability, the amount of the liability can be determined with reasonable accuracy, and economic performance has occurred with respect to the liability.

DISCUSSION

I. Both state law and bankruptcy law are sources of liability for postpetition interest on general unsecured claims. In *Federal Sav. & Loan Ins. v. Moneymaker (In re A & L Properties)*, 96 B.R. 287 (C.D. Cal. 1988), the court interpreted the "legal rate" at which interest must be paid pursuant to § 726(a)(5) to be the contract rate where applicable and, alternatively, the rate of interest under state law. In Texas, the applicable legal rate of interest is six percent. Tex. Rev. Civ. Stat. Ann. art. 5069-1.03 (Vernon 1979).

Regarding § 726, the First Circuit stated that when a debtor does not have an independent obligation to pay interest with respect to a claim, the bankruptcy court has the power to award interest on the theory that there has been a detention by the bankruptcy court of the monies due. *Debentureholders Protective Comm. v. Continental Inv. Corp.*, 679 F.2d 264, 268 (1st Cir.), *cert. denied*, 459 U.S. 894 (1982).

As a general rule, I.R.C. § 163(a) allows as a deduction all interest paid or accrued within the taxable year of indebtedness.

I.R.C. § 461(a) states that the amount of any deduction allowed shall be taken for the taxable year which is the proper taxable year under the method of accounting used in computing taxable income. Under I.R.C. § 448, WTMC is required to use the accrual method of accounting. WTMC does so.

Under I.R.C. § 461 and Treas. Reg. 1.461-l(a)(2)(i), the present deduction of a future expense is allowed for the taxable year in which all events occurred which establish the fact of the liability, the amount of such liability can be determined with reasonable accuracy, and economic performance has occurred with respect to such liability (the "all events" test).

In the case of interest, economic performance occurs with the passage of time. H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 861, 98th Cong., 2d Sess. 875, *reprinted in* 1984 U.S.C.C.A.N. 1563. Regarding the determination of the amount of the liability, the parties do not dispute that six percent, as established by the Texas statute, is a reasonable figure. The issue remaining is whether, in a Chapter 7 liquidation, postpetition interest on general unsecured claims is a fixed obligation of the debtor's estate. The case authority on this issue is both limited and sharply divided.

In bankruptcy proceedings, as a general rule, postpetition interest on general unsecured claims is not allowed. Under § 501, a trustee may file a proof of claim in a bankruptcy proceeding for interest or, as stated above, under § 726(a)(5), the bankruptcy court has the power to award interest on any allowed claim paid. However, § 502 determines which claims are allowed. Section 502(b)(2) specifically disallows claims for unmatured interest in bankruptcy proceedings.

In a Chapter X case under the prior Bankruptcy Act, *In re Continental Vending Mach. Corp.*, 1977-1 U.S. Tax Cas. (CCH) ¶ 86,093 (E.D.N.Y. Nov. 19, 1976), the court denied an interest deduction and held that no actual liability for interest existed under either a legal condition making the liability contingent upon the happening of a future event or an economic improbability of payment. *Id.* at ¶ 86,096. *See also Burlington-Rock Island R.R. Co. v. United States*, 321 F.2d 817 (5th Cir. 1963), *cert. denied*, 377 U.S. 943 (1964) (economic improbability of payment of the taxpayer's obligations prevented it from deducting interest owed on

the obligations); *Guardian Inv. Corp. v. Phinney*, 253 F.2d 326 (5th Cir. 1958) (legal condition making the principal and interest on a second mortgage owed and payable only upon prior payment of a first mortgage precluded accrual and deduction of interest).

The trustee asserted that accrual of postpetition interest on unsecured claims is allowed under the Fifth Circuit's holding in *Fahs v. Martin*, 224 F.2d 387 (5th Cir. 1955) (improbability of payment due to insolvency is not a justification for disallowing the accrual of interest on a secured obligation). However, the *Continental Vending* court observed that the Fifth Circuit has not followed its own decision in *Fahs v. Martin* in its subsequent cases that characterize that decision as "about as far as [accrual] can go." *Continental Vending*, 1977-1 U.S. Tax Cas. at ¶ 86,097; *Burlington*, 321 F.2d at 819.

The trustee further asserted that *Fahs* is still good law. In *Southeastern Mall Transport, Inc. v. Commissioner*, 63 T.C.M. (CCH) 2893 (1992), the tax court considered an interest accrual issue and concluded that the *Fahs* rule still governs in the Fifth and Eleven Circuits. *Id.* at 2906. However, *Southeastern Mail* is not a bankruptcy case and the accrual of interest expense arose from a fixed obligation, a contract for the purchase of business assets. *Id.* at 2903-2904. Both *Fahs* and *Southeastern Mail* involved secured obligations, which generate different treatment than unsecured obligations. Therefore, this court declines to follow *Fahs* and its progeny in this case.

Additionally, the trustee argued that in Revenue Ruling 70-367, the I.R.S. acknowledged the appropriateness of the accrual and deduction of expenses when the taxpayer is insolvent. Rev. Rul. 70-367, 1970-2 C.B. 37. Revenue Ruling 70-367 involved the accrual of interest expense on bonds by a railroad during the pendency of reorganization proceedings. The contractual obligation arose before reorganization proceedings. The ruling concluded that under the facts, accrual was proper. However, a revenue ruling's precedential value is limited to the facts of a particular transaction. Rev. Proc. 89-14, 1989-1 C.B. 814, 815. The facts in our case differ from those of the case considered in Revenue Ruling 70-367. In WTMC's case, the obligation was statutorily set and the potential for payment arose during bankruptcy proceedings. Thus,

this court declines to follow such precedent.

Section 726(a)(5) conditions payment of postpetition interest on any allowed claim on payment in full of all claims under paragraphs (1), (2), (3), or (4) of the subsection. Thus, any obligation to pay postpetition interest on general unsecured claims is not fixed until the bankruptcy estate pays in full the principal amount of all allowed claims in full. § 726(a)(5); *In re Boston and Maine Corp.*, 719 F.2d 493 (1st Cir. 1983), *cert. denied*, 466 U.S. 938 (1984). *See also In re Oahu Cabinets, Ltd.*, 12 B.R. 160 (Bankr. D. Hawaii 1981) (exception to nonpayment of postpetition interest on unsecured claims where existence of surplus after all creditors are otherwise paid in full); *Thompson v. Kentucky Lumber Co.* (*In re Kentucky Lumber Co.*), 860 F.2d 674 (6th Cir. 1988) (unsecured creditors not entitled to postpetition interest where the debtor was considered insolvent at confirmation but subsequently obtained a large unexpected settlement of a pending suit).

The trustee's argument for postpetition interest on unsecured claims under article 5069-1.03 of the Texas Revised Civil Statutes fails for the same reasons. Under article 5069-1.03, interest on claims starts "on the thirtieth (30th) day from and after the time *when the sum is due and payable*." Tex. Rev. Civ. Stat. Ann. art. 5069-1.03 (Vernon 1979) (emphasis added). In a bankruptcy proceeding, postpetition interest on unsecured claims is due and payable upon payment of the allowed claims and only if there is surplus. Thus, the liability is not fixed under the "all events" test in I.R.C. § 461 and, under *Continental Vending*, interest accrual is not allowed.

The facts revealed that WTMC was insolvent during taxable years ending September 30, 1982 through September 30, 1987, and September 30, 1989 through September 30, 1991. On the other hand, during WTMC's taxable year September 30, 1988, WTMC's assets exceeded undisputed and unsecured claims but not total filed claims. Therefore, under the authority of *Continental Vending*, the "all events" test has not been met and WTMC cannot accrue interest for federal income tax purposes with respect to the general unsecured claims for any of the taxable years ending September 30, 1982 through September 30,1991, because the accrual is contingent on the legal requirement of payment of all allowed unsecured

claims and on the economic ability to do so.

The creditors' right to postpetition interest revives if a Chapter 7 bankruptcy estate ultimately proves to be solvent, and then only if a surplus exists after payment of the principal amounts of all claims. § 726(a)(5); *Continental Vending*, 1977-1 U.S. Tax. Cas. at ¶ 86,097; *Debentureholders Protective Comm.*, 679 F.2d at 268-269. At that time, the holders of allowed unsecured claims are entitled to receive postpetition interest on their claims before any surplus is returned to the debtor. § 726(a)(5); *Debentureholders Protective Comm.*, 679 F.2d at 268-269.

II. In *In re Fondiller*, 125 B.R. 805 (N.D. Cal. 1991) and *In re Rode*, 119 B.R. 697 (Bankr. E.D. Mo. 1990), Chapter 7 trustees filed tax returns on behalf of the estates and requested prompt determination of the estates' tax liabilities under § 505(b). The IRS did not respond within 60 days but, thereafter, it filed tax claims against the estates. As of the date of the IRS tax claims, the estates were still open. The respective courts each concluded that under § 505(b) the bankruptcy estate was not discharged from liability for taxes. Additionally, each court concluded that the estate was not a "successor to the debtor" under that statute. Moreover, these courts found that the legislative history of § 505(b) discusses only discharge of the trustee and the debtor but not of the estate.

The *Fondiller* court observed that the purpose of § 505(b) is to protect the trustee from liability for a tax falling on the estate that is not assessed until after the case is closed. 125 B.R. at 808. The court added that legislative policy to terminate tax liabilities when the IRS does not act quickly to allow estates to close promptly is inapplicable in this case because the estate was not closed when the IRS filed its claim. *Id.*

As of the date of this opinion WTMC's bankruptcy proceeding is still open. Under the authority of *Rode* and *Fondiller*, § 505(b) does not discharge WTMC's bankruptcy estate for the $23,044.58 estimated tax penalty for WTMC's taxable year ended September 30, 1989, which was assessed outside the 60-day period.

This court's finding that accrual of postpetition interest on

unsecured claims is not allowed disposes of the plaintiffs argument that IRS assessment of the estimated tax penalty of I.R.C. § 6655(e) is erroneous.

CONCLUSION

The court finds that postpetition interest on general unsecured claims for WTMC's taxable years ended September 30, 1982 through September 30, 1991 is not permitted under § 502(b)(2) and § 726(a)(5) because the liability was not fixed as required by the "all events" test of I.R.C. § 461.

Additionally, the court finds that under § 505(b) the bankruptcy estate is not a successor to the debtor. Therefore, the IRS properly assessed the estimated tax penalty for WTMC's taxable year ended September 30, 1989 and the bankruptcy estate is not discharged from this liability.

ORDER ACCORDINGLY[4]

DATED: June 22, 1993

s//John C. Akard
JOHN C. AKARD, BANKRUPTCY JUDGE

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[4] This Memorandum shall constitute Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law pursuant to Bankruptcy Rule 7052. This Memorandum will be published.

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 94-10089

In the Matter of: West Texas Marketing Corporation,

Debtor.

Walter C. Kellogg, Trustee,
West Texas Marketing Corporation,

Appellant,

versus

United States of America,
(Internal Revenue Service)
Appellee.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the
Northern District of Texas

On petition for rehearing and suggesting for rehearing en banc

(July 26, 1995)

Before Smith, and Barksdale, Circuit Judges, and Fitzwater,[1] District Judge.

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[1] District Judge of the Northern District of Texas, sitting by designation.

The Petition for Rehearing is DENIED and no member of this panel nor Judge in regular active service on the Court having requested that the Court be polled on rehearing en banc, (FRAP and Local Rule 35) the Suggestion for Rehearing En Banc is also DENIED.

Entered for the Court:

s//Rhesa H. Barksdale
United States Circuit Judge

Respectfully submitted,

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